



REPORT ON WOODIES DIY IRISH INDOOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

26TH & 27TH JANUARY 2008

Monday 28th January 2008

Highlights of the weekend's Irish Indoors Athletics Championships included no less than four Irish records, impressive PBs by local stars Amy Foster and Ciara Mageean and a spectacular victory by 800m maestro James McIlroy. Added to this were record entries and a large appreciative crowd.

However honours for the top performance has to go to US high jumper James Nieto, who achieved an Irish All Comers record of 2.26m – perfect competition for up and coming locals Gary Coulter and Jason Harvey.

On the Saturday evening, in the men's 5k Walk, the ever-consistent Robert Heffernan, who is already selected for Beijing, took two seconds off his own record to record new figures of 18.51.46. A few minutes later, Ireland's Kelly Proper set the long jump alight in the first round when she added 3cm to her own recent record to jump 6.28m. A third Irish record followed in the men's shot, when title holder Kieran Kelly of Father Murphy AC threw 18.320m.

Possibly the most impressive record from a local perspective came in the women's 1500m, where City of Lisburn's Ciara Mageean continued to dominate athletes many years her senior. Fifteen year old Ciara took a massive 8 seconds off her PB to defeat Roseanne Galligan and set a new Irish junior record of 4.26.52. With performances like this, the Kilkeel girl is rapidly becoming one of the most exciting prospects in Irish athletics.

Another relatively easy local victory came in the men's 3000m, where Gareth Turnbull led from the start to win the 3000m in 8minutes 6 seconds. However, this performance was usurped by a delighted James McIlroy in the 800m. The Larne man ran a tactically

brilliant race to stay on the shoulder of classy Kenyan Richard Kipligat before unleashing a decisive burst on the last lap to record a convincing victory in 1.49.61.

Afterwards McIlroy said he was in the form of his life, and had used the race as preparation for the World Indoors in Valencia. Following this he eventually hopes to gain GB selection for Beijing. It was indeed pleasing to see Olympian McIlroy come good at long last on his home soil.

The much anticipated women's 60m was won by Commonwealth Games silver medallist Anjike Onuora in 7.38s from a pleased Ailis McSweeney of Leevale, who took the scalps of local stars Amy Foster and Anna Boyle. Foster, who is coming into good form, had at least the consolation of recording two PBs through the day.

The equivalent men's race went very much as anticipated, with the classy American Rae Edwards winning in 6.70s from team mate Josh Norman. Ballymena's Paul Brizzell failed to qualify after an indifferent heat.

Finally the women's 60m hurdles suffered from the late withdrawals of champion Derval O'Rourke and Sweden's Kallur. In their absence Sarah Claxton took the honours in just over eight seconds.

All in all, another highly successful championship, which is becoming increasingly popular with each passing year.

Official website address: www.indoorathletics.net

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